"Simply put, this is summertime blockbuster escapism in the style of X-Men." – AIPT

EMPYRE

X-MEN

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ISSUE #1

WRITERS Jonathan Hickman & Tini Howard
ARTIST Matteo Buffagni
COLOR ARTIST Nolan Woodard
COVER ART Mike McKone & Chris O'Halloran

ISSUE #2

WRITERS Gerry Duggan, Benjamin Percy & Leah Williams
ARTIST Lucas Werneck
COLOR ARTIST Nolan Woodard
COVER ART Stephen Segovia & Sunny Gho

ISSUE #3

WRITERS Vita Ayala, Zeb Wells & Ed Brisson
ARTIST Andrea Broccardo
COLOR ARTIST Nolan Woodard
COVER ART Eduard Petrovich

ISSUE #4

WRITER Jonathan Hickman
PENCILERS Jorge Molina & Lucas Werneck
INKERS Adriano Di Benedetto & Lucas Werneck
COLOR ARTISTS Nolan Woodard & Rachelle Rosenberg
COVER ART Kyle Hotz & Dan Brown

LETTERER VC's Clayton Cowles
ASSISTANT EDITOR Annalise Bissa
EDITOR Jordan D. White

X-MEN CREATED BY **Stan Lee** & **Jack Kirby**

COLLECTION EDITOR **Jennifer Grünwald**
ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR **Lisa Montalbano**
EDITOR, SPECIAL PROJECTS **Mark D. Beazley**
LAYOUT **Jeph York**
SVP PRINT, SALES & MARKETING **David Gabriel**
ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR **Maia Loy**
ASSOCIATE MANAGER, DIGITAL ASSETS **Joe Hochstein**
VP PRODUCTION & SPECIAL PROJECTS **Jeff Youngquist**
BOOK DESIGNER **Jay Bowen**
EDITOR IN CHIEF **C.B. Cebulski**
DIGITAL MANAGER/PRODUCTION **Tim Smith 3**
DIGITAL PRODUCTION **Meghan O'Leary**

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1

The Sanctum Sanctorum. One year ago.
I believe what you're asking is...
...simply **not possible.**
I know what you're thinking: "With my powers I willed something to be and so surely the power to reverse that must exist--*it must, I need it to.*"
You might say, "Stephen, what about atemporality and the fallacy of cause and effect? Can't we--*as the righteous protagonists of reality that we are*--not simply erase the act from ever occurring?"
It's a fair question--certainly one to ponder. But here's why I think it's unlikely:
Your powers over reality make you a touchstone of the reality in which they exist.
And the existence of those powers--*and you yourself*--act in eternal opposition of the erasure of them.
Simply put: *We have seen what comes from playing with you as you play god.* ***No?***
You erased a million mutants from existence. And now you're asking me how to ***unring that bell.***
Well, I cannot...and I believe you cannot either, for to deny the existence of what you have done--*to erase yourself from your own history*--is not possible.

So allow me to offer you this advice, Wanda Maximoff--you need to finally embrace your sin. *Let it consume you...*
Then ring a bigger bell.
Genosha.
Nine months ago.
Seven months ago.

Six months ago.
Five months ago.
Four months ago.
Three months ago.

One month ago.
No one can undo the things they've done. I can ask for forgiveness--given enough time I might even forgive myself--*but the sin...*
The sin of what I've done can't be painted over. It can't be scrubbed off or cut away... it's a wound too raw to ever heal.
So I seek not forgiveness--***I seek redemption.*** A greater good. A more moral right. An act that eclipses any other...
A resurrection.
Mutants of Genosha...
LIVE!

What's this?
Hey, are you okay?
Wha-- what?
She doesn't look *okay.*
I hope not.
Do you think something is wrong with her? Maybe she's been in the sun too long...
No.
Heat spoils the meat. And that would be too bad.
No.
NNOOOOOOOO!

Now.
Earth.
Wakanda.
Genosha.
Cotati invasion fleet.
Staging area for Wakandan strike.

Report.
The temperature is equatorial standard for an iron core planet. It's actually quite favorable for growth.
There's also a shocking amount of ash in the soil--*rich with calcium carbonate and potassium.*
I'm taking root, sir.
I don't mean you, I mean the mission, you leafy disaster of a soldier. Ru'tuh-baga?
Ru'tuh-baga! We and the other three strike teams are strategically positioned to launch an attack on our intended target.
The area is rich with the composite ore: *sagurii quoii.*
Vibranium.
Hur?
They call it Vibranium.
No fools, these Wakandans. They realize the value of it, even if they've surrounded it with some kind of ritualized animal religion.

Are they going to be a problem?
They are meat, captain. Never mythologize the meat.
Yes, sir!
What of this staging area?
Secure?
Yes, sir. We did run off some indigenous life-forms right after we landed. We captured one so as to interrogate it.
It has proven... *uncooperative.*
Up for a challenge, science minister Qqoi?
I relish any opportunity for plant to dominate a hostile environment.
Bring us this prisoner.
Here you go, minister.
Excellent.
Now, who might you be?

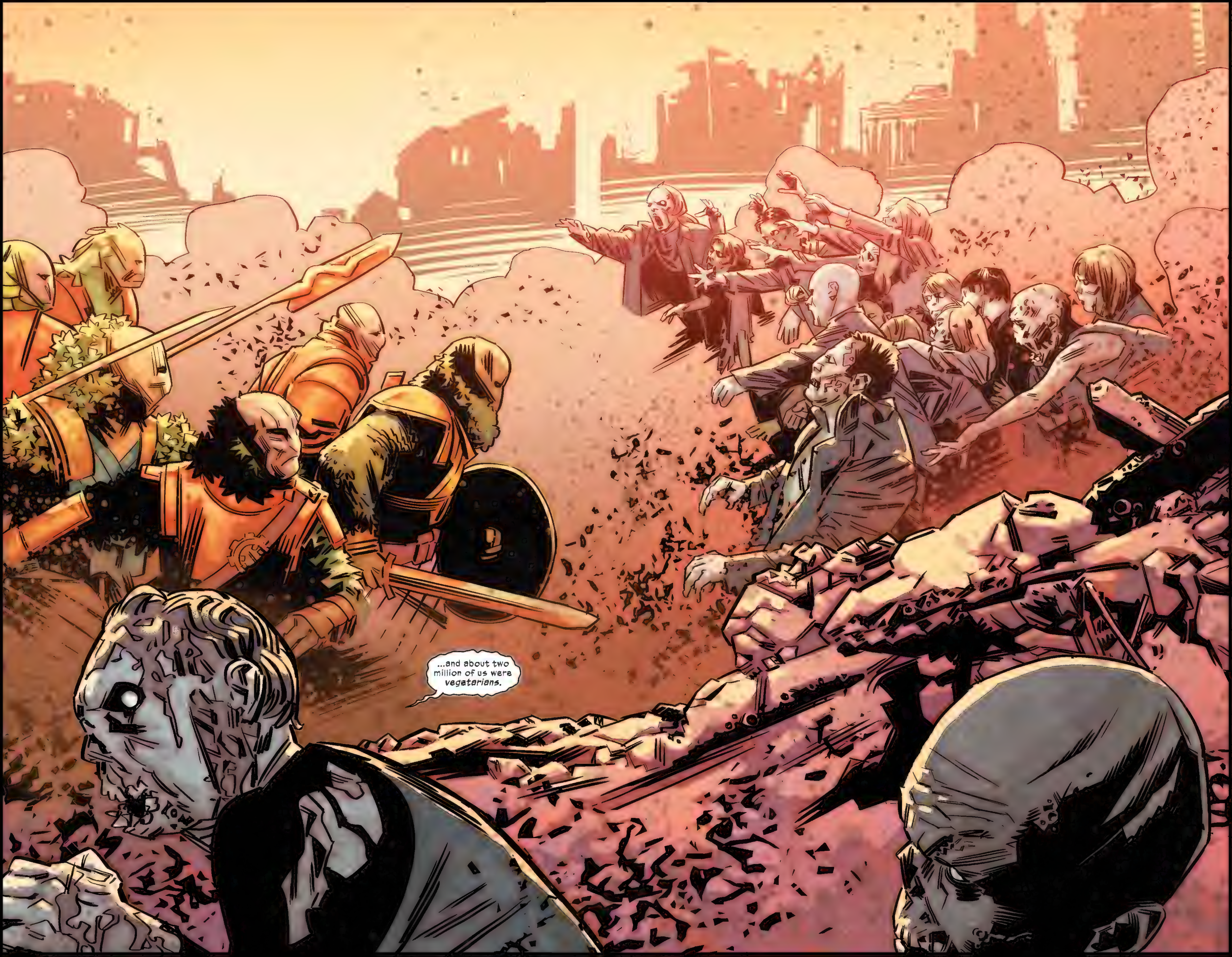
Zzzrnnn zrn zrrnn nnzzz zrrr.
Zzrnnn?
Fascinating. It seems to be speaking in some kind of indecipherable dialect.
...
Its jaw fell off.
Well...
Let's try that again, shall we?
Better?

You'll have to tell me. I understood myself perfectly.
Hrmpt. Better.
I want you to tell me about this island and if we need to concern ourselves with you or any of your kind.
Oh yeah. You're pretty boned, plant man.
This is literally the worst place aliens could have landed. Everyone who lives here is a mutant.
Mutant?
Like regular humans. But with powers.
And what are your powers, mutant?
My mutant name is Explodey Boy and I blow stuff up.
Watch.

BA-BOOOOM!
TZZCHUNG

Huh. Weird.
Kinda tickles.
RUMBLE RUMBLE
Something's moving out there.
Why aren't you dead?
Actually, I am dead. Undead. *Whatever.*
The same as everyone else who lives here. But *that's not your real problem.*

What is?
RUMBLE RUMBLE
Something's coming!
RUMBLE RUMBLE
There were sixteen million mutants on this island who died...
Here they come!


...and about two million of us were *vegatarians.*

[EMP]........XM_]
[YRE]........01_]

[ALIEN] PLANTS VS. ______ [MUTANT] ZOMBIES

[AGAIN]...............[_THE]
[PRETE]...............[NDER]

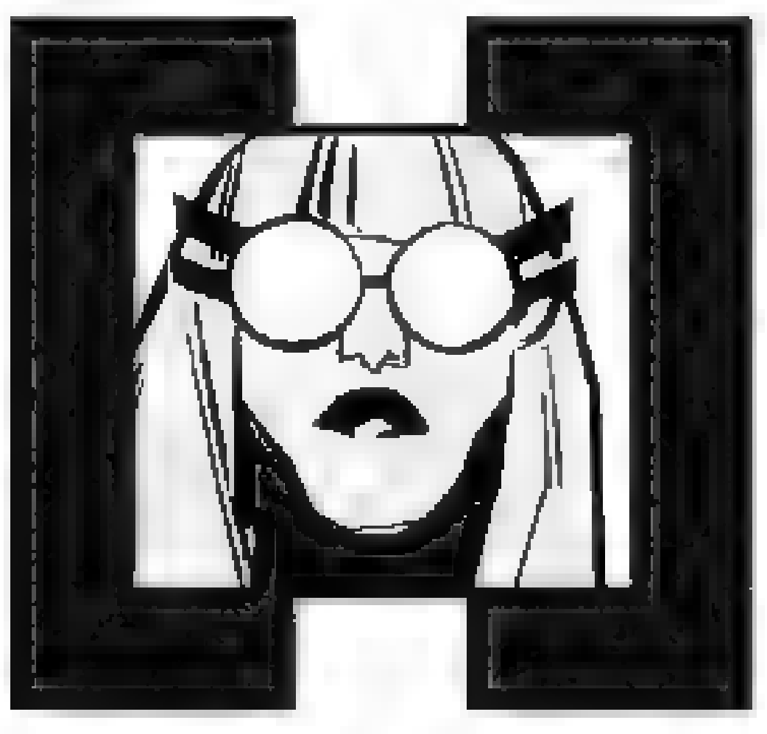
[MEAT_IS].............[00]
[MURDER_].............[01]

[EMP__[0.1]
[X [0.1]

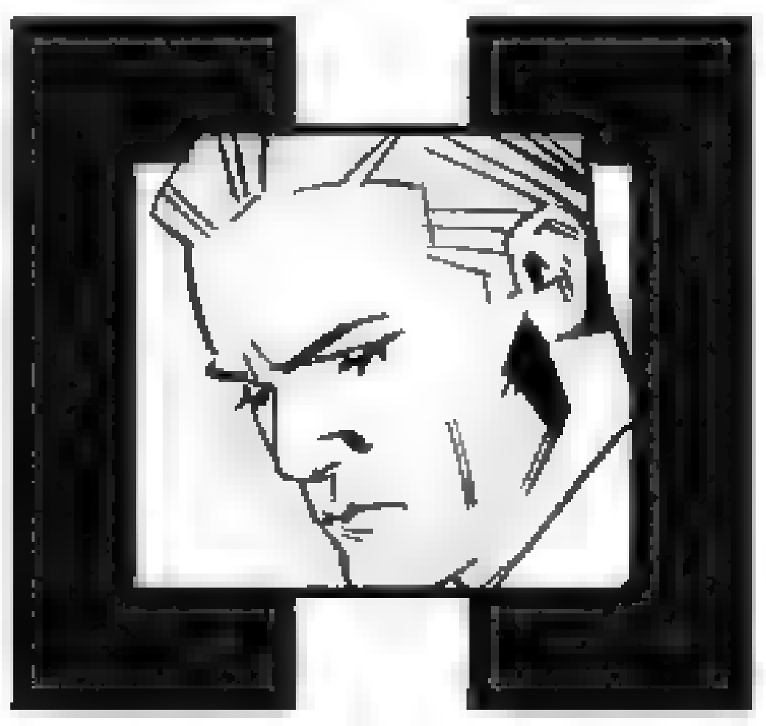
[EMP__[0.1]
[X____[0.1]

EMPYRE: X-MEN

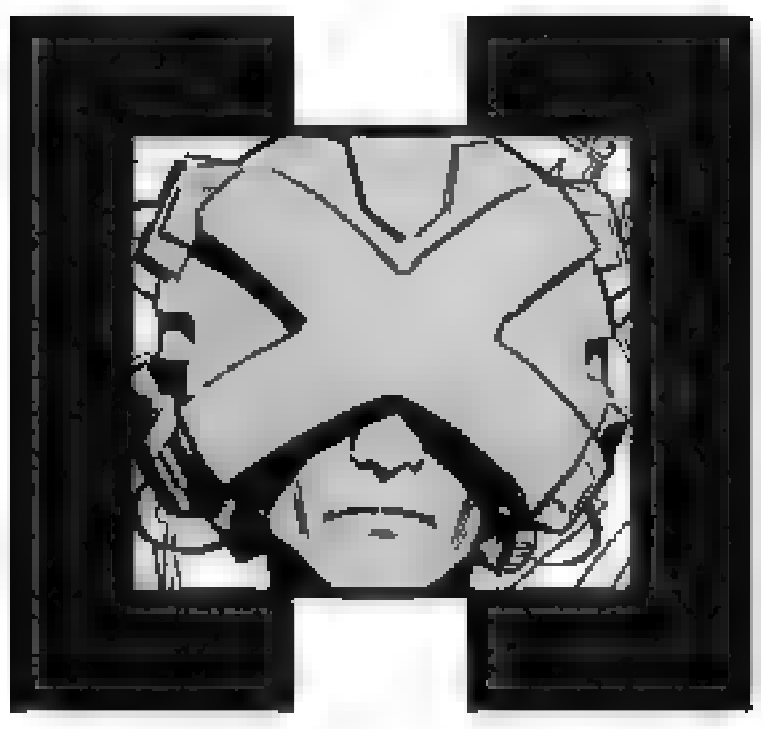
Wanda Maximoff, the Scarlet Witch. The Pretender, who with her magic decimated the mutant population -- and who now seeks to do right by those she wronged...


Magik

Penance


Angel

Black Tom Cassidy


Professor X

Magneto

Multiple Man

[EMP [0.1]
[X____[0.1]

[.empyre....]

Noblesse Pharmaceuticals Corporate Headquarters. Val de Seine, Paris, France.
CRUNCH
They got my order wrong.
This is why I prefer Krakoa for everything but *shopping*.
Be nice to them, M.
Food service is thankless work, and it seems to be part of the *human condition*.
They might never escape that kind of predatory employment.
Well, I tipped her the change from a *fifty*, so I'm *helping*.
Keep your fork out of my lunch, Worthington.
Of course, Madam Boardmember.
All right, you two, security says move along.

Lunchtime's *over.*
Back to *work.*
Take my trash for me?
Thanks, sweetheart. What's next on the docket?
It's 1 p.m. You have a meeting with Noblesse Pharmaceuticals, a meeting with Serval Industries and you're hosting a happy hour at 5.
Did Sunspot tell you he had all this *X-Corp* stuff figured out and then *bail* for *space?*
I can see why. This *sucks.*
What Roberto did was just paperwork. Signed forms and transferred assets.
Professional courtesy dictates we give everyone their own formal handshake meeting, their own personalized kickoff.
Ugh, I propose we *abolish* meetings. Do business like *mutants.* Not like *humans.*
Don't you spend any time around the council room?
Mutants *love* meetings.

Illyana, it's always a delight to have you, but I'm not sure why we needed *security.*
I appreciate the personal touch, but...look at these old men.
Warren could take them.
Oh, that was just a joke earlier. I'm not really here for *security.*
I'm keeping an *eye* on you for the Professor.
To make sure you don't *screw it up.*
Excuse me?
What did you just say to me, you little--
Hey! I didn't say because you didn't *ask.*
Why in the world are you *spying* on us?
I'm not *spying.*
I'm "monitoring you for redundancy."

Redundancy.
Charles Xavier's portfolio has increased *exponentially* recently, and he just asked me to tag along and keep an eye on you two.
Why did you wait until *now* to *tell* us that?
'Caush I *really* don' wanna shtay for thish meeting.
You look mad. Wanna go talk to Xavier about it? I've got the Krakoa Express up and running.
BWOMMMM
I'd *love* to.
Terribly sorry, gentlemen! We'll have to postpone.
Something's come up.
We'll send an email!

Krakoa.
I can feel that something is *choking the life* from the *greenest tendrils,* throttling them like a breech birth and a navel string.
Black Tom's gates are *not sick!*
This is no *sickness of the vine.*
BWOMM
Burned and *skinned* and *slimed* and *more--I canna take it.*
We are *planting gardens* we canna tend!
I *hear* you, Tom. We will have someone go to the Genosha gate *personally* to examine it.
We can't take chances!
We canna lose ye again, Professor!
Yes, Tom.
I understand. Would you excuse me one moment?

How went the meetings?
Charles.
Monitoring X-Corporation for *redundancy?* In *secret?*
I know you've just acquired a huge portfolio, but X-Corp is...our own. What could be *more* necessary right now?
We *need* X-Corp. It's one of the only ways we can use all that we have against some of the world's worst people... and all that *they* have.
Do you think I wouldn't take this *seriously?* For once, I can do what's in my *blood*--the family I came from--and put it toward you all--the family I chose.
But if brilliant minds like yours and Monet's can be used *elsewhere*... we want to use you *there instead.*
You misunderstand me, Warren.
I do not think you would misuse any of our *vast* resources. Money and pharmaceuticals... these aren't my concerns.
The resource I must monitor is *you,* Warren.
We simply don't have enough *good mutants,* Angel.
Even embracing the assistance of our former enemies leaves us woefully short of the manpower we need.
I need to know if this *X-Corp* venture is worth our time. Because if it isn't...
...I need you somewhere else.
That is why the redundancy was brought up. You, my boy, would *never* be redundant to me.
...So what's Black Tom so upset about?

I *said* I'd teleport out and take a look at it.
But *Groundskeeper Willie* over there is all--*"Acch! Ye cannae!"*
I'll put together a team to see why the Genosha gate isn't working properly.
It'll be me, Monet and Magik--you can take us there. The three of us will be squad leaders.
From there we'll take--
You may take with you *one* more citizen.
There could be *thousands* of forces in there. We could be putting ourselves in *God* knows what kind of harm--
I know that Charles made himself clear with regard to our needs.
He has laid down the law. Do not make me *enforce it.*
You may take with you *one citizen.*

Awwwww yeaaaaah!
Jamie Madrox, the *Multiple Man,* at your service.
I appreciate your finding the time in your busy schedule to come along.
Hey, heresy incoming, but:
I know the gates are supposed to be like this big *blessing* or something. But I feel we spend a lot of time teleporting around to *fix* the gates.
It's a garden, Magik.
You don't just turn it on and let it run.
You have to tend to it.
I'll take a lap and look around. I can get up high and see--
Wait!
Does anyone else *hear* something?

WHADUMPWHADUMPWHADUMPWHA
Plant people?!
We're on a cliff! Where are they running to?
...Or running from?
RAAAAHHHHHHHH!
FLUT
Up we go.
RRRRRRRRRRRR

...Plant people.
I see them...
And zombiesssssss.
I think we're on the same page about what to do here. What do you say, Monet?
You ready for dinner?
WHIRZZZRZ
SHINK
SLASH
First course, salad!
WHIRRRR
WHISH
Next course, *meat!*
CLAANK
Call it *devil's advocate* coming from me...
...but *that* felt like a *first wave.*
You're not wrong.
Let's get down to that gate.

This is officially *X-Corp* business, yes?
I thought you were supposed to be some sort of *brilliant business mind.*
Stop trying to find an *angle,* Monet. We're here on Charles' orders to get the gate working and report back.
And all you want to do is *follow rules.*
No *innovation.*
No risks and no *rewards.*
Penance...
I don't know about you, but I wanted to revive X-Corp to make a difference in a way people like you and me are best at. I'm not here to be assistant manager.
But if you are...
...you're welcome to answer to *me.*
I think I found the problem!
No one's been pulling the *weeds.*

I brought a *weed* whacker.
Don't.
It's like defusing a bomb. Cut the wrong vine and the whole gate dies.
The aliens are a new species of plant life--one that's apparently hostile to any *others* on Genosha.
This could take hours.
I know what you need.
About sixty unskilled hands with nothing better to do.
SNAP
My time to be a hero.
rip
rip
rip
RUMMBBLLE
Madrox?! Hurry up!
Looks like we've got another wave incoming.
It's zombies this time!
They're going to trample the gate!

Trample it?! They're *Genoshan zombies.*
Meaning they're *mutants. They have an X-gene,* even if they're *dead.* If they get through that gate they'll rush Krakoa.
Then we take care of them all before the gate is back up--
Gate's back up!
Team Madrox!
POP
POP
POP
What is this?
Oh, *please* say one of us is a slime-dupe...
They're gonna hit the gate!
rrrrrrrrrrrrraahhh--
WHADUMPWHADUMPWHADUMPWH
ADI

SPLUUUUDDDDTCHHH
SSSSSS
rrrrrr
rrrrrr
rrrrrr
I know anger is a sin...

...but these *mutants try my patience,* ladies...
Except for that blond hunk.
I like his wings.
I'd sit him on *my* Christmas tree.
Augusta, don't be *trashy.*
We don't need to be *trashy.* We're *experts.*
If your *friends* didn't tell you, we're *Hordeculture.* And we're here because we know plants.
And do you know what makes *plants grow, blondie?*
A whoooole lotta *bulllll@#$%.*

[EMP]........XM_]
[YRE]........01_]

[ALIEN]
PLANTS
VS.
[MUTANT]
ZOMBIES
VS.
[OLD]
LADIES

[D-WORD_]...............[__MY]
[B-WORD_]...............[OPAL]

[MEAT_IS].............[00]
[MURDER_].............[01]

#1 VARIANT BY

Anna Rud

Z

Ladies...I... have no idea how you just used our Krakoan gate, but you must leave. This is *not* a safe place to be. It's been invaded by aliens, and--
My, oh my. It's a *Sven with wings.*
I won't know if he's as good as Sven until he's helping me stretch my hammies.
He can razz my berries any time, but look alive, Hordeculture, we're not at the YMCA anymore.
I'm Angel.
Of course you are, you beautiful #@$%stick. Now step aside. We have work to do.
Wait, *what?!*
Hordeculture don't run, hot wings.
We need samples of *everything.*

We'll only know for sure under a microscope, but I'd be willing to bet a Burke Williams gift certificate that it's a chimera with roots on multiple planets.
Not like this...not by *meat.*
Sorry. You picked the wrong planet to invade. Earth has enough problems...
...we don't need an invasive species on our f-word "to do" lists.
AAAEEEIIII!
He didn't seem too important. Let's get an officer or a general.
We just got here, Edith. We'll sample them all.

Magik, we need a stepping disc for our friends.
They're leaving.
Ask before you touch a lady...
...we got ways of dealing with handsy men.
AH--
cough
Ahuack!
Hi.

Using pheromones always feels naughty as fudge.
Nobody asked you, Opal.
Ready to join Hordeculture, Angel?
'Course! How can Warren Worthington III be of service?
I thought these ladies were so @#@$in' rad when they showed up and Cuisinarted that alien... but they obviously suck *so hard.*
I don't like dividing our attention. Get them out of here so we can return to the mission.
I'd worry less about us and more about the rate of dispersal in this sea breeze, young lady.
COUGH!
Everybody just be cool! We can all be friends.
Jamie. C'MON!
I held my breath for as long as I could...

DAMMIT!
CHOOM
AH!
Young lady, don't @#$% with a woman's ride!
I'LL SAY IT LOUD FOR THE HEARING AID CROWD--
--RELEASE MY FRIENDS...OR MAGIK IS GONNA BECOME THE NUMBER ONE CAUSE OF DEATH FOR WOMEN WITH PRE-EXISTING CONDITIONS OVER THE AGE OF 65.
What a $@#$%.
This B has one H of a sauceboat on her, I'll give her that.
Hey, gents! Little help over here!
Right!
OF COURSE!

Where to?
This is fun.
I'm so lucky.
M, whatever happens next--just tell the Council the truth. I gave them every chance to stand down.
HEY! EYES UP! ZOMBIES INBOUND!
RUMMBLE
There must be... thousands.
Millions.
Give me some eyes in the sky, pretty boy.
And sing me some Neil Diamond.
Hands, touching hands...

Reaching out, touching me, touching you...
None of you better want to make out.
Is that an option--AAAAAH!

Cotati strike leader to command-- we have met stiffer resistance in the staging area than we anticipated.
KRAK
That's an understatement. Withdraw now, or none of you will leave alive.
We should call in Sunfire to blast this place from orbit.
These poor zombie mutants have been through enough.
You heard my friend. Get your bulbs back in that ship and get the hell off our planet!
The X-Men killed a billion broccolis once, so what's a couple more?
Unhand me, girl!

Hold still, sweetie.
AARGH!
Another sample for science.
We gotta get Edith to safety!
Let's go, boys!
Cotati strike leader to mother ship--the staging area is overrun with aggressive meat and must be cleansed. We have no choice but to detonate the ship.
Understood.
I suggest a truce.
For the moment.
May I ask why I can't read your mind?
Tsk. A lady never tells.

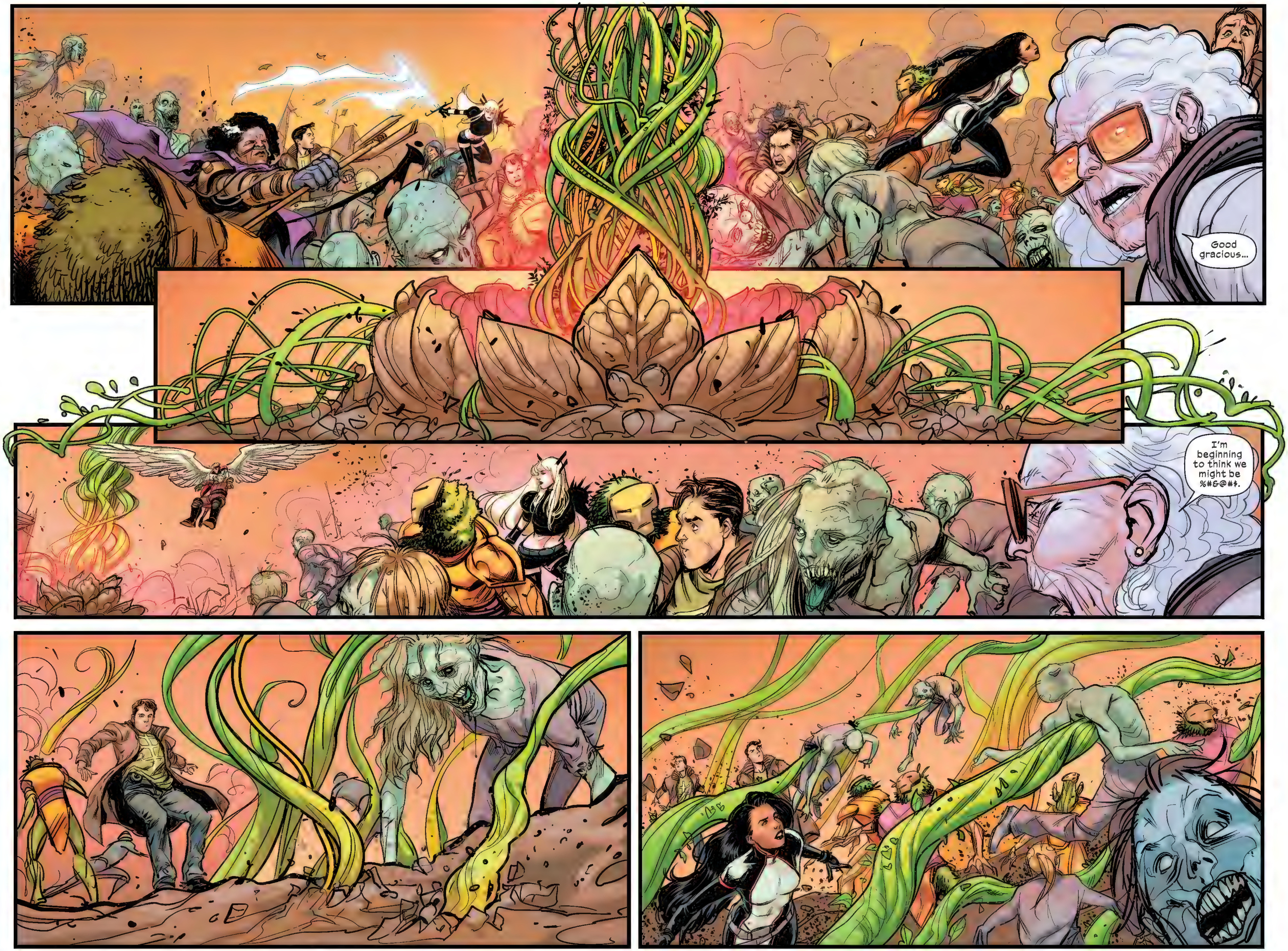
What are you doing chitchatting? Isn't your power to *think clearly?!* They're gonna blow up that ugly-ass ship.
I think it's time to deploy some overwhelming force.
Ooh. I like that too.
Thank you for your cells. Hope you enjoyed your stay on Earth.
You're right, M. I *knew* this place stunk real bad. And not just from all the rotting flesh...I know what it is now--it smells like someone took a big old magical $@#% here.
Only one way to clean this up--with my old pals from Limbo.
HEY, DEMONS!
EAT ALL THE PLANTS AND ZOMBIES--BUT LEAVE THE OLD LADIES TO ME!
Sounds good, boss.

Inside the Cotati warship.
DRAFT
Hey. Where are you going?
Don't leaf.
I haven't finished my salad.

SPLAT
SPLAT
Be there in a sec, okay?
I just have to get my pants on.
I don't suppose you have any glue?
Or a sewing needle and thread?
Or even duct tape?

Let me guess. You're initiating some sort of self-destruct sequence.
I'm looking forward to it.
That's what I'm best at, after all. Going boom, boom, boom.
But just so you know... you're going to a lot of trouble for nothing.
You can't kill what's already dead!

The Cotati, like any plant, cannot kill itself.
But when faced with cold or fire or blight...
...we retreat and adapt and find a way to grow again--stronger than before.
You should know that the moment this vessel landed...
...it began to root.


Good gracious...
I'm beginning to think we might be %#&@#$.

It's like a seedpod or a botanical womb.
Lily! Edith!
Monet! Madrox!
They're inside that thing!
We need to get a sample of this thing.
#%@% your sample, Opal!
Let me through!
Let me in!
Okay. Okay. Maybe you're right.
But watch your d-word mouth, Augusta.
We need to find another way.
What?! What other way?!
The barrier-- it's somehow repelling any psionic and telepathic influence.

"They're cut off from us.
"It's like they're on a whole other island."
Krakoa.
Black Tom, this is Sage.
The gate to Genosha is down.
Banjaxed? Completely arseways?
I don't know what any of that means. But yes.
Earlier, it was like the hinges was squeaking and the lock got rusted out.
But this door, it's been kicked down to splinters, innit?
We don't like the stink of this, do we?
No, we don't.
But we got other ways of seeing what needs to be seen.

"The pollen.
"And the dirt. And the fungus.
"And the mold. And the general fecundity of Krakoa.
"It only retains its essence a few hours.
"But it's a hitchhiker in the meantime."
ALL RIGHT, LITTLE TOM, LET'S SEE WHAT NONSENSE IS MAKING THIS GATE GO ALL--

BOLLOCKS...

SLIK
Got a nice, juicy sample.
Good!
SLSSHH
FWAP FWAP
OY!
TAKE ME DOWN. I NEED TO TALK TO MAGIK!
B-Black *Tom?* Is that *you?!*
AYE, YE BLOODY *HIMBO!* NOW TAKE ME DOWN TO THE *WAR CAPTAIN!*

MAGIK!
Don't ask how, but a tiny avatar of Black Tom has manifested on my shoulder and is asking to speak with you.
HOW?
ANGEL'S A DIRTY BOY, *THAT'S* HOW!
I'll clean him up!
Stay away from those old biddies or they'll horny-ensorcell you with that gas again, Warren.
FWAP FWAP
Huh?
But they're *not* old...
That's right, sugar.

WHAT'S THE SITUATION, WAR CAPTAIN?
My official report is that it's %$&#%@.
Seconded!
We've got about three different hostile parties at play here.
Plus the Cotati warship just initiated some kind of self-destruct sequence--turning it into some kind of giant egg?
Seed-pod!
Grar...
SHLISK
Anyway, now Jamie, Monet and two of the Hordeculture hags are trapped inside a giant *seed-pod.*

What else do you two plant @#$%&# know about what's happening?!
This seedpod barrier is resistant to psionic influence--our powers don't work on it.
Do your powers work on plants?
No.
Then there's your answer why. This here's an invasive plant species, girlie.
Like kudzu. Goes buck-wild when it tastes new land and all it wants to do is f-word and kill while putting down roots to claim a place.
Plants playing #$%@, marry, kill. Got it. How do we get rid of it? Weed killer or whatever?
Not unless you want to kill everything else around it--us included.
Now, if we had some time or access to a *lab*, maybe, we could come up with a targeted plant killer. Maybe synthesize the hostility of black walnut trees...
Explain.
Black walnut trees have a toxic root system to keep other plants from growing on their turf!
You get all that?
Aye. Black Tom copies...

"...and Krakoa hears. Sending backup...
RRRRRRRRUMBLE
"Krakoan organic defense system--going live now!"
KSHAK
ZZZT
It's working!
No... it really isn't...
We just made the damn thing *angrier!*

SPSSH
Ah, @#$%.
STOP!
Whatever you're doing, *stop!*
It almost killed Monet!
#&%$--I forgot about the draw! Krakoa feeds on psychic energy!
This one's not lookin' so good.
You think it's a mutie PMS thing?
And you--

AHHH!
Magik! No!
My beloveds! Your Angel is coming!
Hang on to me!
THUNK
Ow!
No.
Not until they release the Genoshan gate.

Magik, this is not the way to ally ourselves!
Tell that to *them.*
They're the ones who hijacked the gate and cut us off from support. They've doomed us.
W-we'll open the gate! Right, Augusta?
...Yeah.
If you betray us, then your next visit to Limbo becomes a permanent stay.
Lily was right. We *do* need to revise the pheromone gas formula to work on women.
And demons.
Black Tom--when the gate's up, patch me through to Krakoa. I have an idea.
Krakoa.
Ladies and gentlemen--
--this is your war captain, Magik, speaking.

On behalf of the small fight crew currently dealing with *big* @#$%#&%& in Genosha--I'd like to ask that any and all available psychic mutants please report to the Genoshan gate. *Immediately.*
I *repeat--*
--can all--
--available psychics--
--immediately report--
--to Genosha?
Aye... good on ye, then...
Step right up... don't be shy...

Black Tom thanks ye for your service!

3

Genosha.
GRMM GROMM GRMMM
PTOO
No good.
No brains.
Need braaaaains.

Yes...
...brains.
Yes. This way.
So many fresh brains.

Need to climb. Find an opening.
Selfish plants, trying to keep all the damn brains for themselves.
We need more flyers! Who can fly?
Let us through.
We know the way.
Follow us.

What madness is this?
Old women and plants fighting?
This is **beneath** us.
Finally!
Krakoa **needs** you!
Without you, she **cannot** fight here. She needs your psychic energies. The more the better.
And where are *you* headed?
Bringing this golden oldie someplace where she'll be of some use.
Just be a good Cuckoo and give Krakoa a hand.
Krakoa good. Plant people *bad.* Kill them **dead.**

Hey now, where are you--?!
Put a sock in it, Opal.
All right, you heard the demon lady...
Psychics...
...mount up!

LET'S GO PAUL BUNYAN ON THEIR ASSES!

Krakoa.
Beast...
...meet Opal.
Opal, Beast.
Ah, yes. One of the women of Hordeculture.
Cyclops was telling me about you.
Opal says she needs some black oak and a lab in order to create a serum to kill the alien plant people.
Alien--?!
It's *a thing.* I don't have time to talk about it.
Just let me know when she's finished.
If she fails, *kill her.*
Do not pay her any mind. I will not kill you. That's not what we do.
That girl needs to learn some manners.
I don't disagree. Now tell me...

"...what was that about alien plant people?"
What's wrong with your girlfriend there? She afraid of a little danger?
I don't know, she just passed out.
And she's not my girlfriend.
SHIIIK
Well, you better snap her out of it. We're being overwhelmed here.
SPLORT
Only a matter of time before these things cut down all your twinsies and we're *royally* pooched.
Hey up there!

You guys need a hand?
He's the one!
That walking heap of composting flesh is the one who killed Science Minister Qqoi!
Grind up his bones and fertilize the gardens of our ancestors with them.
Make you humans a deal!
Mutants, actually.
Whatever.
These plant buggers make real bad eating.
If I get them off your case, I get to keep all the bits of prime cuts they left all over the ground, okay?
I got no beef with mutants. Used to be one myself. Still am.
Sorta.
Anyhow, we got a deal?
Yeah...I guess?
Cool.
You might wanna find some cover.

Why?
Trust me.
KABOOOOOM

BLUB BLUB BLUB
BLUB BLUB BLUB
BLUB BLUB BLUB
WHGGG WHGGG WHGGG
Well?
In the words of the great Archimedes of Syracuse, having just discovered his most famous principle, concerning how to deduce the volume of objects with irregular shapes...
...eureka.

A bit later...
Magik? Magik! Dammit, girl, do you know how hard it is to conjure an avatar so far away?!
And now you've destroyed him?!
Don'tcha be ignoring Black Tom!
"We've got bio-weapons in need of teleportation."
Hur-argh!
Still no answer?
Ach! The daft creature's gone dark.
I see.
Well, in that case...

...allow me to assist.

Don't wander too far--we don't want to get separated.
I know-- they aren't making it so simple!
The harder the shell, the softer the meat!
They've cut me off!
There're too many!
Psychic brains have to be like Kobe beef, right?
Or shoe leather.
Help!
Let's find out, shall we?

Make sure when they resurrect me, it's without the memory of what it feels like to be eaten alive.
hurk!
Resurrection is expensive--
--you'll have to make the most out of *this* body.
Th-thank you.
There're too many. We have to get to higher ground.
We should find where they are coming from and cut it off!
Unless you just want to fight endless waves of rotting corpses.
...
Good point.
Excuse you!
Let's go see if we can't find where these things are coming from.

SKROOOOOAR!
SPLORCH
The smell of these meat-beasts is *offensive.*
BAMF
Well, that went better than expected--
Heiliger Strohsack!
Unhand me!
Gotta know if you taste blue...
That is for me to know and *you* to ever wonder about!
BAMF
KLACK

This must be the target, ja?
SPLOOORT
KSSSSSSS
Juhu!
Hurk!
That smell...
...fresh meat.
...Hoppla...

Teleportation one.
!
This place is thick with them.
Yes, but they don't seem to being *coming* from here so much as trying to get *in*.
Teleportation three.
I don't think this is the source either.
I feel something messing with the *energy* of this plane. This way is *closer* to it.
I can leave you with the other psychics and--
Watch your back!
Never mind, you're with me.
Thanks, I... Thanks.
Teleportation six.
Huh... closer.
Teleportation eight.
This is it--

--I can feel it in my teeth.
Holy...
It's *beautiful*...
Do... you...hear that?
Magik? Are you all right?
I hear nothing, but something is wrong here.
My *head*-- it feels like a migraine but coming from the outside.
So... beautiful...
Magik, *don't*.
THE POWER!

I FEEL IT FLOWING THROUGH ME.
Attention, X-Men!
??
I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but...
...we have a complication.
OH, THIS? THIS I LIKE!

That's how he helped? By blowing everything up?
Hnnnn...
Quite a deal you made. You're a real *bargain hunter.*
CRNNCHH GROM CRNCHH
Dammitsh, my damn dentshures came loosh!
GRLLLP FRLLLP
Oh God...
GRMM GROMM GRMMM

Pleasure doing business with you.
Having second thoughts?
My God...
Mmmm Mmm!
Oh, hey, gang.
grf grf
Nnnnn?
Plenty to go around.
Can you show a little respect? Those are *MEs* you're eating.
I'm not asking you to say grace first, but come on.
We should go.
Yeah, how 'bout swinging this chair around so I don't have to watch this?

Gyarrcchhhh!!!
Gaakkk!!!
gnarg gnarg gnarg
zrrg?
nnf?
harg?
narf?
garrgarr
That's... that's a lot of zombies.
THROW WHATEVER PIECE OF ME YOU'VE GOT! I DON'T CARE! TOSS IT ALL!
HERE, EAT THIS!
RUN!!!

The *blue goblin* burned a hole in the *mega-bulb*...
Let's go get our girls!
I...I feel *weird.*
I think our escort's comin' down off the pheromones...
I don't care. Edith and Lily are in that thing!
I'm gonna be sick...
WOMEN, MOVE ASIDE...
...I'VE BEGUN A GREAT, GREAT WORK.
Oh my God. You guys are *old.*
Shhhh!
Like, shouldn't-be-outside old.
Shut up!
What do you have there, girl?

THE WORLD TREE ROOT, WHICH BRIDGES THE REALMS OF LIFE AND DEATH.
THE TRI-CROWN OF THE CHAOS GODHEAD, WHICH PERVERTS THE LAW OF NATURE.
SHZZARK
THE EYE OF ALAK-RAH, THE VOID SPIDER, WHO FROM BLOOD WEAVES LIFE.
WHAT I HAVE IS POWER OVER DEATH.

BOW TO THE *ZOMBIE QUEEN* OF *NEW GENOSHA!*
I-Is she serious? I've got arthritis. If I bow I'm never getting up again.
BLEARRGHH!

BLEAARRGHH
You poisoned me!
It's not my *fault* you can't handle our drugs!
And if you tell me how old I look one more time I'm going to put one between your eyes.
When I say "one," I mean a *bullet seed* from my *witch hazel heater.* Kill you dead as hell.
Will you shut up?
W-what is that?
CRNCH CRNCH
grrff grrff.
marm marm.
GLRP GLRP
CRNCH CRNCH
nog nog
GLRP GLRP
garr garr.
marm marm.
nog nog
gom gom gom.
marm marm.
CRNCH CRNCH
garr garr.
SLRP SLRP
gom gom gom.
nog nog
GLRP GLRP

It's a *giant brain.*
That is a *Cotatinaught,* grown from the collective strength-sap of our people in its *doomsday pod.* The superstitious among us call it *holy.*
I've never seen one pull its roots.
I couldn't miss it. Not even in my condition.
But... *disaster...*
"The *pod walls* were breached. First by *Cotati ghouls...*
"...then the *pestilent mutants.*"
The *broadleaf lord* is infected.

"Now we see the horrors that grow in this benighted dirt.
"We see the terrible fruit of this herbicidal mission.
"I may have turned the key that birthed this miscreation...but you forced my hand, mutants.
"And now we die together.

GLOR GLOR GLOR GLOR!
"As one we meet our *sins*."

4

What's this?
Hey, are you *okay?*
Wha-- what?
She doesn't look *okay.*
I hope not.
Do you think something is wrong with her? Maybe she's been in the sun too long...
No.
Heat spoils the meat. And that would be too bad.
NO.

NNOOOOOOOOO!
This is... This is...
This is wrong. It cannot be.
It will not be!
I will not allow it.

Later.
You did what?
I did what you said.
I rang a bigger bell.
I suppose that's one way of looking at it...
There may be others.
I don't understand what went wrong.
I'd start with the idea that you thought you could resurrect sixteen million dead people.
I believe that--*if I may be so bold*--is where things *"went wrong."*

My research was rigorous... my spell was perfect...
Clearly.
It should have worked.
You tried to undo death, as if you--*or any of us*--have any power in that realm.
You should have known better. But that's the thing with you, isn't it, Wanda?
You still don't understand that you cannot erase bad deeds from existence. You cannot bury sin.
You can only eclipse them with greater deeds.
At some point, you're going to have to embrace that idea and act on it. Until then, you're just going to keep doing this...
Creating chaos and leaving others to clean up your mess.
So you're going to help?
...
I really don't have time for this.

It's sixteen million zombie mutants, Stephen.
Make time.
...
You know that witch in Brooklyn who has the yoga studio that's actually a front for a Vashurrnu well?
Yes. I do. She hates you. *Intensely.*
Yes. I noticed.
She changed her number and I need her new one.
...
What?
For the well. I need access to the well...not the girl.
There's no un-ringing that bell.

Okay. Sure.
Okay. Fine.
Now. Tell me exactly what you did.
Well, first I got an eye from Alak-Rah.
Oh god.
Then a Tri-Crown from a Chaos Godhead named--
What were you thinking?
And I focused it through a root from the World Tree.
You're a damned fool, woman.

WONG!
Yes, Doctor?
I'm sorry-- I know we had this on the books for quite some time and you're only in town for the day--but we're going to have to cancel our reservation at Le Coucou. I'm headed out on a suicide mission.
We'll have to do it some other time.
Of course.
Not a problem.
You %$#&.
You're going to go without me, aren't you?
Have a nice day, Doctor.

First, we're going to need a second void eye to counteract the first...
Normally, this would be quite impossible, but I am owed a long, and painful, favor from this kingdom.
Rest assured, I'll be adding this to your personal tally.
Negating the Tri-Crown is easier...
Chaos covets order, which it seeks to corrupt... and a Godhead of Order seeks any opportunity to impose itself on chaos.
They will want to undo *your work* as much as you do.
What about the root of the World Tree? The Norsemen are steadfast, and I will not get by them a second time so easily.
Best to handle friends in a straightforward manner, I always say. Which is why I brought a keg of beer to distract them.
We have to hurry though.
Why?
By the Gods! ≈KAFF!≈ You deceitful magical bastards!
This is...light beer!

Genosha.
I've constructed an ethereal barrier preventing anything dead from crossing the threshold of the island's edge.
By ship, boat or plane... no resurrected flesh can leave Genosha.
Which simply leaves the undoing of your spell.
Thank god.
No. Thank me, Scarlet Witch. Thank me and my mighty works.
WHA-ZOOOOM

Nothing happened.
As we've so clearly covered in this exercise of ours...
One cannot un-ring a bell.
I've made it so that your initial spell-- *enabled by the artifact you made--* will dissipate when the staff does.
How long will that take?
This isn't science, but if I had to put a number on it...
Around 30 days.
30 days... and then all this will be undone.
What if someone comes here during that time?
Well, my dear Wanda, I'd cross your fingers, say a little prayer...
...and hope that doesn't happen.

29 Days Later.
GLOR GLOR GLOR GLOR!

WATCH AS I VANQUISH THIS BEAST.
I dunno... it's pretty big.
I mean, really, that's a bit much.

We could run.
We really should run.
No. We stay...and finish this.
If it weren't hard...I suppose everyone would do it.

Here's a thought, Dr. McCoy...
They say that people who talk to themselves are secretly megalomaniacs. What do you say?
I'm sorry, Henry, I didn't hear that. Instead of concentrating on your question of zombie-plant problems, I couldn't stop thinking about how Hordeculture was able to short-circuit our Krakoan biotech...
I'm wondering...is it wrong of me to want to examine their fascinating little machines?
Stealing is always wrong, Dr. McCoy. As you very well know. It's one of the most disrespectful things you can do.
Well, Henry, please understand...I do respect her...as a scientist.
But I just won't be able to respect myself in the morning if I don't take one more little trinket.
Well... I see no small measure of chaos is underway...
And what better time to test the fruits of the first Krakoan act of intellectual property theft?

As for the lingering question--have my actions needlessly shamed our great nation, or was the juice worth the moral squeeze?
CLICK!
HRMMMMMMM...
The old ladies of Hordeculture hacked our gateways, somehow gaining control of them...
ZZAAAK
And now...
ZZAAAK
...I know how they do it.
And so, to answer the age-old question of whether one would rather serve in righteous heaven or rule in pragmatic hell, I'm forced to say...
Dr. McCoy, you just might be the devil.
HRMMMMMMM...
CLICK!
Okay, you can come on through...

Whoa.
Whoa, indeed.
I know that when you heard what was happening over here that you wanted to come through...
...but I want you to be careful. This is no place for a reckless young man...
...not even one who has the mutant power to explode.
I'll do my best to stay out of trouble, sir.

But no promises.
Ah!
There you are.

Hey.
How's it going?
Hrmpt.
Weird. It's like looking in a mirror.
Wish I could say the same, pal.
You... do not look well.
Yeah. I'm a mess. I'm barely holding it together.
See, I almost made that joke but I'm working on some new life philosophies and one them is, "Sure, it's funny...but is it mean?"
How's that working out for you?
Not gonna lie. It's tough. I'm barely holding it together.
Wanna see something gross?
No.
BLEARRAGHH!
See. That's why you shouldn't eat people. That's not cool.
That actually wasn't meat, it was plants so it's actually the opposite of what you're saying because I'm--
Never mind.

So how are you... *me?*
That's a little tricky, actually...
You've been dead a little while--well, *we*--but specifically your body.
Somehow you got brought back--*we're working out how*--but even though you did get brought back, you're not *really us...*
Because you're dead.
But I don't feel dead.
That's the spirit. Live the lie.
Okay, so, why aren't you dead?
Long answer is some kinda interesting stuff wrapped in a bunch of other not-so-interesting nonsense.
Short answer is mutants conquered death and I was resurrected.

Resurrected like me?
So not like me.
This sucks.
Yeah. And it gets worse. Sooner or later we're going to figure out how to undo this whole undead zombie mutant thing.
So...
So.
Yeah.
...
Well, are we okay?
We are.
We're doing really good.
What about Mom and Dad?
We're actually talking. There's another thing that happened where mutants figured out how to cure some diseases.
I hooked Dad up and now his arthritis is gone. You should've seen the look on his face.

So things are all better with the family?
I wouldn't go that far, but... we're talking. So it's a start.
That's nice. I'd like to have seen that.
Yeah.
Oh, here's something you'll like...
Hmmmm?
We had our first kiss.
Really?
Really.
Who was it?
That's the amazing part. You know Arachnidor? That girl with the mutant power to smell like spiders?
Shut. Up.
I know.
She is way out of our--
I know.
...
Well?
How was it?
Well, what?

Oh, come on, you know us... we'd never kiss and--
I will eat your face right now if you don't tell me.
Okay. Okay. In a word?
Amazing.
Totally amazing.
Wow.
That's so great.
A little too great, actually.
What?
I got too excited. I blew us both up.
Seriously?
No, man. Come on.
I was very cool about it. You'd have been proud of us.
So then what happened? *Did it work out? Are we dating?*
We are not.
Turns out we don't like spiders.
Really?
Yeah. Not a fan.
But that was a really good day.

So we really are doing okay?
Yeah.
And everything's going to be all right?
It feels that way.
... So what about me?
Like I said, this is definitely going to end, but you don't have to do anything.
We can just hang out...
...watch these idiots beat the hell out of one another.
Nah. I'm not going out like that.
Give me the jetpack.
Hey. We kissed Arachnidor.
Yes, we did.
See you later. Or *never again.*
Either way it shakes out, thanks, man.

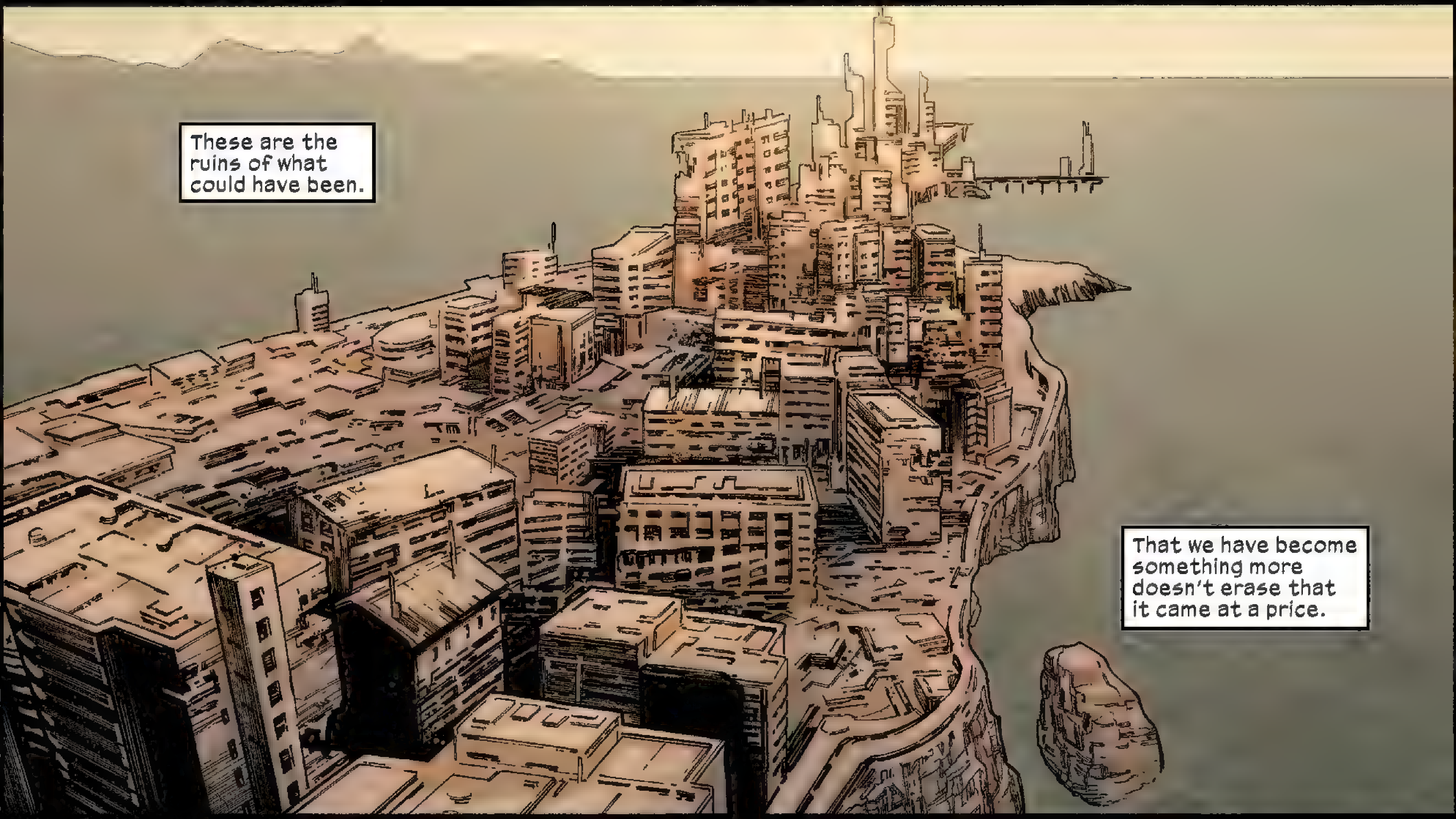
No problem...
"...now go blow some %$#& up."
Open wide.
GLOR-GLOR-GLOR-GL--

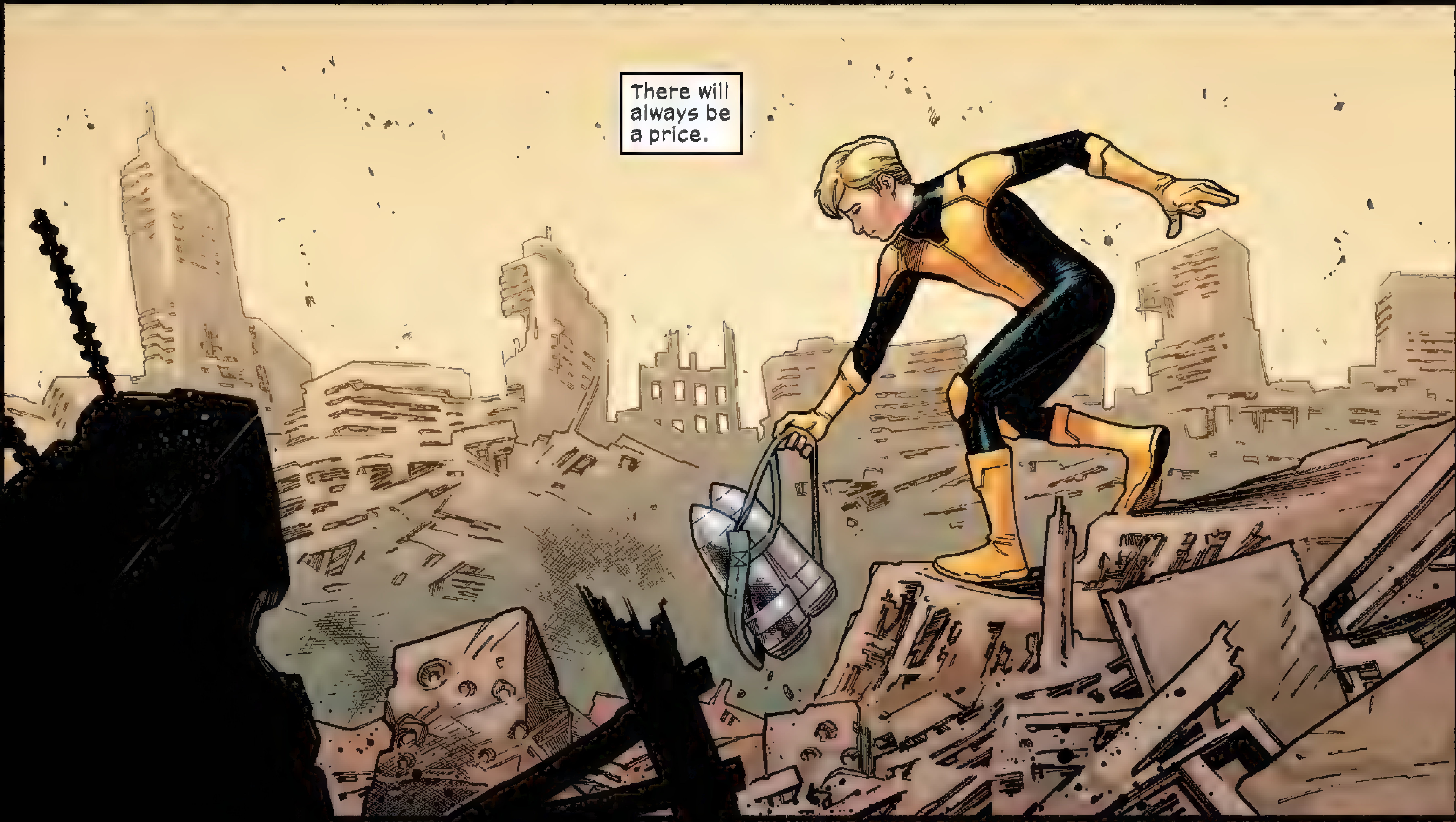
BABOOOOOOOM
Ugh!
Hey, look! All the plant people are dying.
They must have been linked to the giant plant monster, and after it was destroyed they--
NOT DESTROYED...
VANQUISHED.

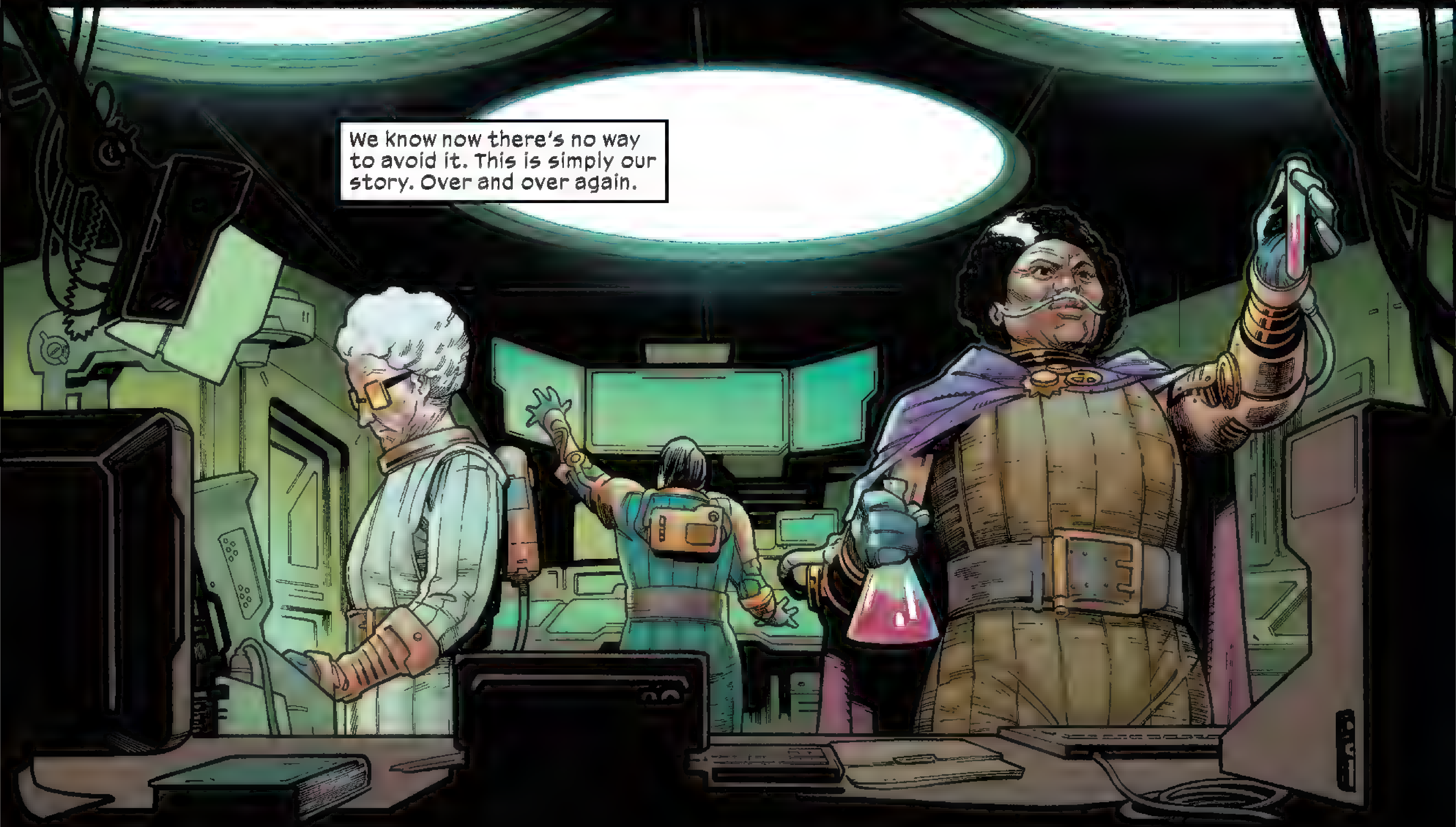
LEAVING ONLY ME AS THE PARAMOUNT POWER ON THIS ISLAND.
Illyana, you should probably--
SILENCE, SLAVE!
I HAVE DOMINION HERE NOW.
ON THIS WORLD AND ALL INFERNAL REALMS I SEE FIT TO CLAIM. ALL THAT I SEE IS MINE.
UNDERSTAND--I AM MISTRESS HERE AND YOU ARE MY SLAVES.
YOU ARE MY SLAVE.
AND YOU.
AND YOU.
Time since spell was cast: 29 Days: 23 Hours: 59 Minutes: 59 Seconds.
AND YOU, YOU DASHING, BLUE DEMON BOY, YOU WILL SERVE ME MOST OF ALL, FOR I FIND YOUR APPEARANCE TO BE--

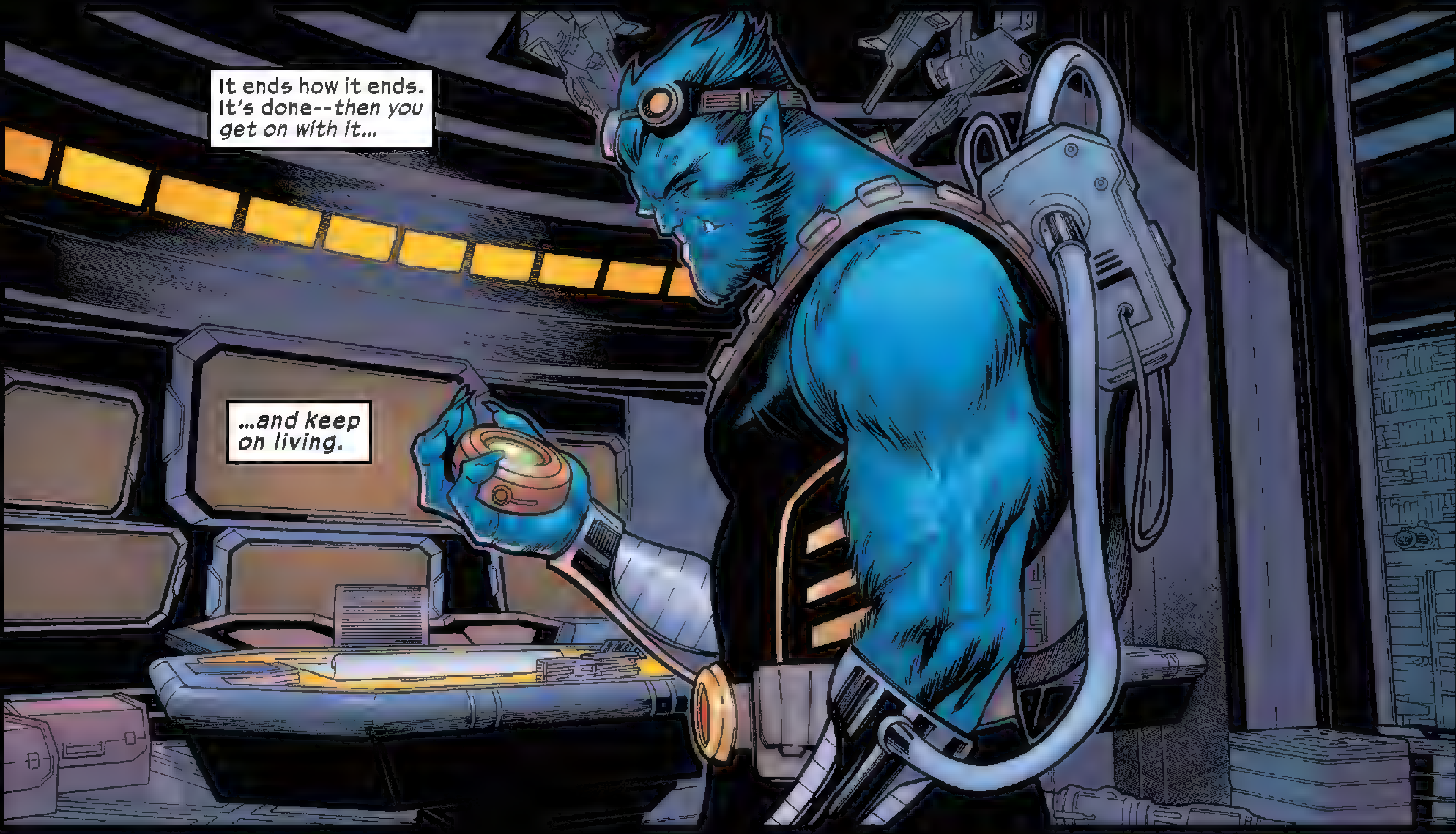
Time since spell was cast: 30 Days.
THWA-ZOOOOM
!!!
Woof.
Had a little moment there.
Well... that's got to be a bit embarrassing.

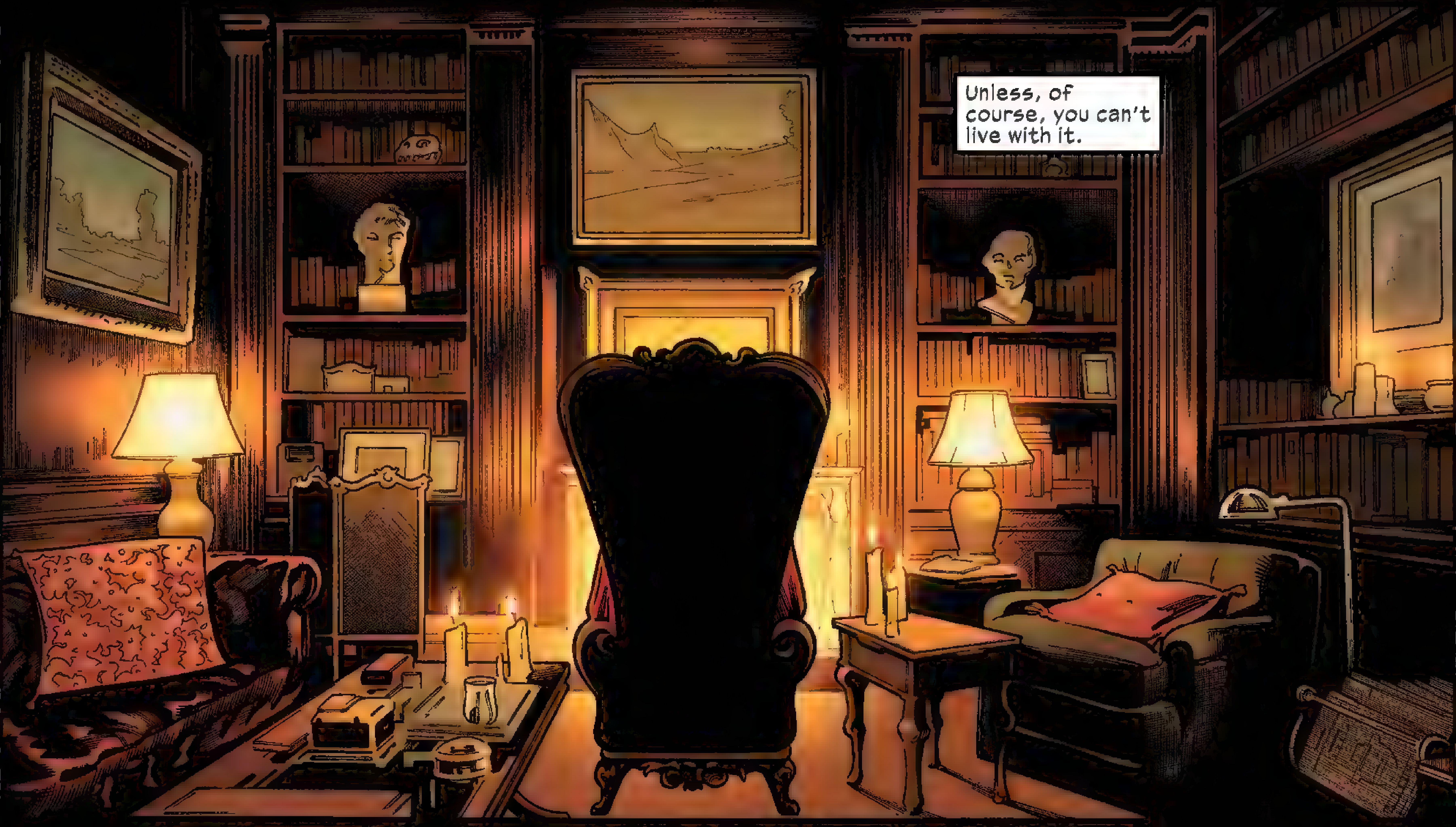
I regret nothing.
Look. The old ladies are making a run for it.
You want me to...?
No.
Not today. Today, they get a pass.
Plus, I stole their tech. So...
Let's just take the win.
So...
Home?
Yeah.

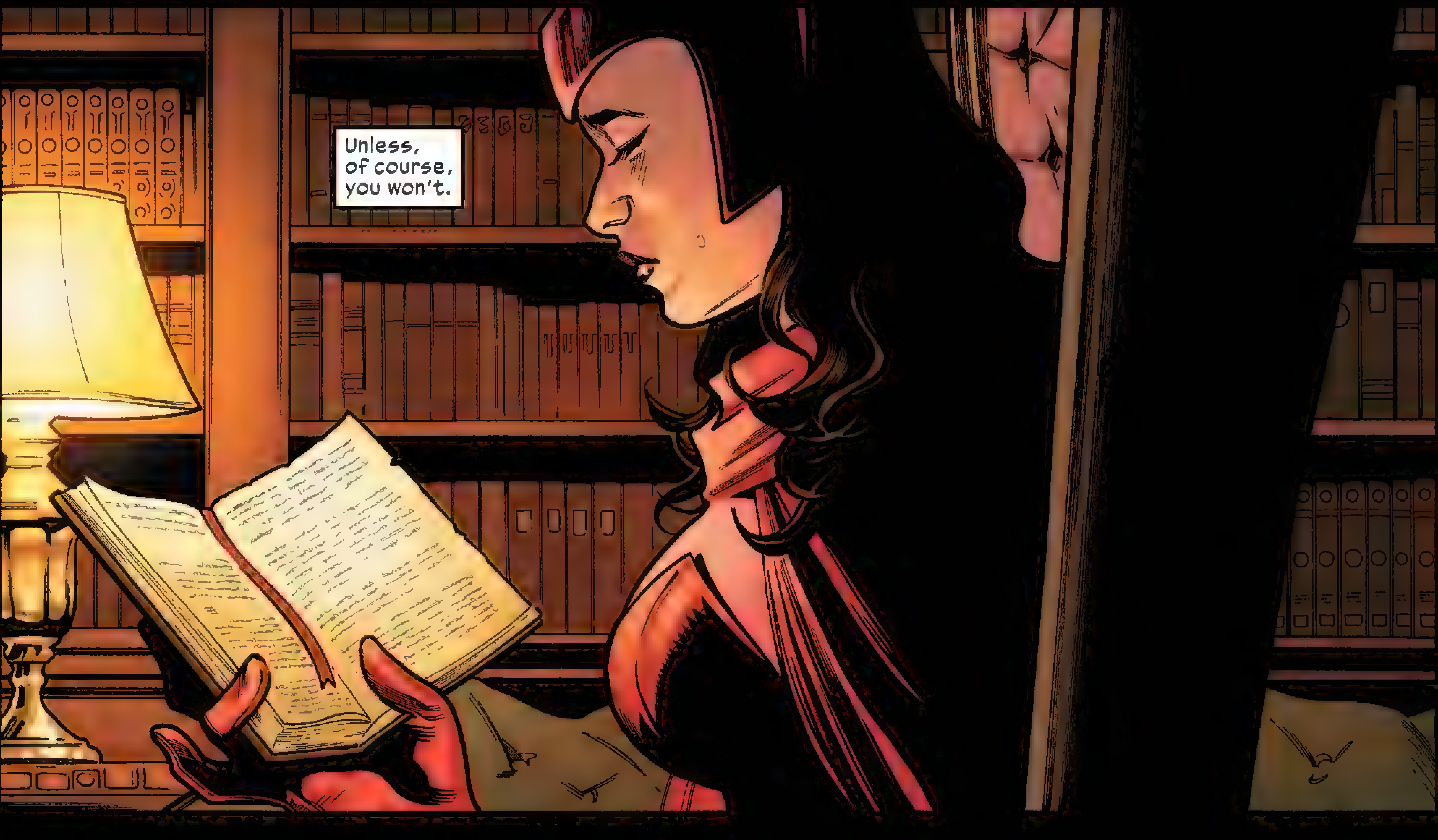

These are the ruins of what could have been.
That we have become something more doesn't erase that it came at a price.


There will always be a price.


We know now there's no way to avoid it. This is simply our story. Over and over again.


It ends how it ends. It's done--*then you get on with it...*
...and keep on living.


Unless, of course, you can't live with it.


Unless, of course, you won't.

EMPYRE
X-MEN

EMPYRE

X-MEN

ISSUE #1

WRITERS .... **Jonathan Hickman** & **Tini Howard**
ARTIST .... **Matteo Buffagni**
COLOR ARTIST .... **Nolan Woodard**
COVER ART .... **Mike McKone** & **Chris O'Halloran**

ISSUE #2

WRITERS .... **Gerry Duggan**, **Benjamin Percy** & **Leah Williams**
ARTIST .... **Lucas Werneck**
COLOR ARTIST .... **Nolan Woodard**
COVER ART .... **Stephen Segovia** & **Sunny Gho**

ISSUE #3

WRITERS .... **Vita Ayala**, **Zeb Wells** & **Ed Brisson**
ARTIST .... **Andrea Broccardo**
COLOR ARTIST .... **Nolan Woodard**
COVER ART .... **Eduard Petrovich**

ISSUE #4

WRITER .... **Jonathan Hickman**
PENCILERS .... **Jorge Molina** & **Lucas Werneck**
INKERS .... **Adriano Di Benedetto** & **Lucas Werneck**
COLOR ARTISTS .... **Nolan Woodard** & **Rachelle Rosenberg**
COVER ART .... **Kyle Hotz** & **Dan Brown**

LETTERER .... **VC's Clayton Cowles**
ASSISTANT EDITOR .... **Annalise Bissa**
EDITOR .... **Jordan D. White**

X-MEN CREATED BY **Stan Lee** & **Jack Kirby**

COLLECTION EDITOR **Jennifer Grünwald**
ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR **Lisa Montalbano**
EDITOR, SPECIAL PROJECTS **Mark D. Beazley**
LAYOUT **Jeph York**
SVP PRINT, SALES & MARKETING **David Gabriel**
ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR **Maia Loy**

ASSOCIATE MANAGER, DIGITAL ASSETS **Joe Hochstein**
VP PRODUCTION & SPECIAL PROJECTS **Jeff Youngquist**
BOOK DESIGNER **Jay Bowen**
EDITOR IN CHIEF **C.B. Cebulski**
DIGITAL MANAGER/PRODUCTION **Tim Smith 3**
DIGITAL PRODUCTION **Meghan O'Leary**

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Anna Rud

Z

3
Ferovich

4

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Todd Nauck & **Rachelle Rosenberg**

#2 VARIANT BY

Lucas Werneck

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Marcus To & **Carlos Lopez**

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ALIEN PLANTS VS. MUTANT ZOMBIES!

- Plant people from outer space have come to Earth as part of the cosmic events of **EMPYRE** — but wouldn't you know it, they happen to arrive just as millions of deceased mutants rise from the grave as undead creatures hungry for human flesh! What are the odds? And can even the **X-Men** handle two simultaneous crises? Aliens! Plant-men! Mutants! Zombies! Demons! Explosions! This one has it all — and then some! The X-Men return to the graveyard island of **Genosha** in a tale so crazy, it took the entire writing crew of the **Dawn of X** line to tackle it!

COLLECTING *EMPYRE: X-MEN* #1-4 – BY JONATHAN HICKMAN, TINI HOWARD, BENJAMIN PERCY, GERRY DUGGAN, LEAH WILLIAMS, ED BRISSON, VITA AYALA, ZEB WELLS, MATTEO BUFFAGNI, LUCAS WERNECK, ANDREA BROCCARDO, JORGE MOLINA, NOLAN WOODARD AND RACHELLE ROSENBERG.

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